

AO 91 (Rev. 08/09) Criminal Complaint

United States Courts  
Southern District of Texas  
FILED

## UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the

Southern District of Texas

DEC 17 2014

David J. Bradley, Clerk of Court

United States of America )

v. )

JOEL CRUZ, DARRION WELLS, DEVANTE  
RUFFIN, and OBINNA UZOZIE )

Case No.

H14-1207M

Defendant(s)

## CRIMINAL COMPLAINT

I, the complainant in this case, state that the following is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

On or about the date(s) of 09/04/2014 - 12/12/2014 in the county of Harris in the  
Southern District of Texas, the defendant(s) violated:

Code Section

Offense Description

18 U.S.C. Section 1028A

Aggravated Identity Theft

18 U.S.C. Section 1349

Conspiracy to Commit Mail, Wire, and/or Bank Fraud

This criminal complaint is based on these facts:

See Attached Affidavit of U.S. Postal Inspector Matthew S. Boyden

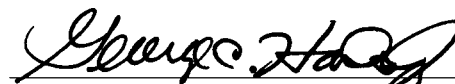
☒ Continued on the attached sheet.

Complainant's signature

U.S. Postal Inspector Matthew S. Boyden

Printed name and title

Sworn to before me and signed in my presence.

Date: 12/17/2014

Judge's signature

City and state: Houston, Texas

George C. Hanks Jr. - U.S. Magistrate Judge

Printed name and title

## **AFFIDAVIT IN SUPPORT OF CRIMINAL COMPLAINT**

1. Affiant, United States Postal Inspector Matthew S. Boyden, has been employed by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service since January 2000. Affiant is currently assigned to the Major Fraud team in Houston, Texas. Prior to that, Affiant served as a lieutenant of police for a municipal police department in Texas. Affiant has served in the U.S. Air Force as a Law Enforcement Specialist and criminal investigator for the Air Force Office of Special Investigations. Affiant has received specialized training in numerous Postal crimes, but primarily those involving "identity theft" and mail fraud related offenses. Affiant has attended training in the areas of check fraud, credit card fraud, and identity takeover schemes. Affiant has investigated hundreds of cases involving fraud, identity theft, and related "white collar" types of offenses. Affiant is authorized to obtain and execute Federal Arrest and Search Warrants. This Affidavit is made in support of a criminal complaint filed against JOEL CRUZ, DARRION WELLS, DEVANTE RUFFIN, and OBINNA UZOZIE.
2. The information set forth in this Affidavit is based upon your Affiant's personal knowledge and/or information provided to Affiant by other law enforcement agents and officers, witnesses, bank investigators, and cooperating individuals Affiant believes to be reliable and credible.
3. Because this Affidavit is being submitted for the limited purpose of supporting a criminal complaint, Affiant has not included each and every fact concerning this investigation. Affiant has set forth only the facts believed to establish probable cause that JOEL CRUZ, DARRION WELLS, DEVANTE RUFFIN, and OBINNA UZOZIE have committed violations of federal law.
4. For the past several weeks, Houston Division Postal Inspectors and Houston Police Department Auto Theft detectives have been investigating a series of car sales at numerous local dealerships where the defendants purchased high-end luxury vehicles using stolen Personal Identity Information and forged identity documents. To date Affiant has identified at least twelve (12) different sales of vehicles valued in excess of \$480,000.00. Affiant has arrested JOEL CRUZ, DARRION WELLS, and DEVANTE RUFFIN and interviewed all three. Affiant has interviewed but not arrested OBINNA UZOZIE. Affiant has learned the following during the course of this investigation and from the interviews:
5. On September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014, JOEL CRUZ (CRUZ) and DEVANTE RUFFIN (RUFFIN) were looking to rent a new apartment and went to the Old Farm Apartments located to 2525 Old Farm Rd., Houston, Harris County, Texas to look at apartments. While there, they observed several boxes of leasing documents containing Personal Identity Information (PII) in a storage closet. After looking at the unit, they secretly returned to the complex and stole the boxes containing hundreds of individual victims PII (old lease records). Affiant confirmed this information by speaking with the property management as well as RUFFIN and WELLS.

6. After obtaining the stolen PII, CRUZ, WELLS, and RUFFIN prepared counterfeit temporary Texas licenses with their picture but in the name of the victims. They prepared additional support documents like utility bills and bank statements. They took the forged documents to different vehicle dealerships and purchased vehicles after obtaining financing in the victim's name. The defendants used the victim's true PII and addresses to complete all of the paperwork. Affiant obtained a reviewed what is commonly referred to as the "Dealer File" which each dealership maintains for each sale. Copies of the forged documents, including the Texas driver license and credit application, were obtained and reviewed. The vehicle purchases started after the burglary at Old Farm Rd. and were continuing up through the arrests of CRUZ, WELLS, and RUFFIN on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The following a list of the twelve vehicles:

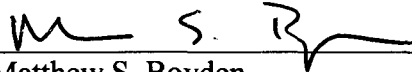
Year	Make	VIN	Victim Name	Dealer	Amount
2006	Land Rover	SALSF25486A926642	Adam Berge	Auto World of Texas	\$16,995.00
2010	Land Rover	SALSF2D41AA244759	Adam Berge	Auto World of Texas	\$34,350.00
2010	BMW	WBAKA8C53ACY35941	Brandon Rudd	Champs Auto Sales	\$36,687.24
2011	Porsche	WP0AA2A78BL014836	Sarah Greer	Porsche of W. Houston	\$48,000.00
2011	BMW	WBAKB8C52BCY64815	Brandon Rudd	Champs Auto Sales	\$39,390.00
2011	Porsche	WP0AA2A71BL013477	Sarah Greer	West Houston Infinity	\$61,000.00
2011	Mercedes-Benz	WDDHF5GB6BA469215	Meagan White	Carmax	\$31,988.00
2012	Chevrolet	2G1FC1E33C9202313	Chaston Miller	Carmax	\$32,023.82
2012	Audi	WAUCVAFR4CA000735	Jordan Brown	Champs Auto Sales	\$41,999.61
2014	Mercedes-Benz	WDCGC5HB5EG212799	Kevin Plowden	MB of Sugar Land	\$45,722.95
2014	Chevrolet	1G1YM2D74E5102737	Brandon Rudd	Mac Haik Auto Direct	\$61,000.00
2014	Mercedes-Benz	WDDSJ4EB1EN142509	Adam Berge	MB of Greenway	\$35,980.00
<b>TOTAL:</b>					<b>\$485,136.62</b>

7. During a review of the deal files Affiant observed that CRUZ, WELLS, and RUFFIN all used stolen identity information to purchase vehicles. Affiant also linked the defendants to various deals via their cell phones.
8. On December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014, Affiant detained and interviewed Redelle Clewis after he was observed operating the stolen Corvette listed above. During an interview with Clewis, Affiant learned that CRUZ, WELLS, and RUFFIN were living together in an apartment

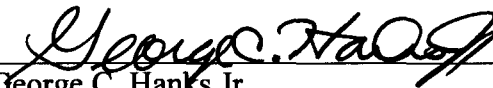
located at 14698 Briar Forest #4301, Houston, Harris County, Texas. Affiant also learned that Clewis went with WELLS when they purchased the Corvette from Mac Haik Auto Direct using the name Brandon Rudd. Clewis stated that OBINNA UZOZIE (UZOZIE) was their salesman and immediately became suspicious because they couldn't remember all of the Brandon Rudd information. After further discussions UZOZIE obtained the credit report for Rudd and assisted them in completing the loan application. During their discussions with UZOZIE he offered to provide them with passports which he stated they could use as additional forms of identification at other dealerships. This information was also confirmed during Affiant's interview with WELLS. Both WELLS and Clewis stated that UZOZIE knew they were not the real Brandon Rudd but sold them the vehicle anyway. UZOZIE suggested they go over to his friend's business called Champs Auto Sales to buy additional cars. He asked if they could even get a car for his brother. On December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014, WELLS and CRUZ purchased three (3) vehicles from Champs Auto Sales using the names Brandon Rudd and Jordan Brown. WELLS then gave the 2010 BMW to UZOZIE's brother.

9. At the time Affiant detained Clewis, Houston Police Department investigators called Mac Haik and asked them to send a wrecker so they could retrieve their Corvette. Approximately thirty minutes later UZOZIE showed up and spoke with Affiant. He denied any knowledge that the deal had been fraudulent. He denied knowing anything about the defendants obtaining a vehicle and giving it to his brother. About two hours after Affiant left the area, UZOZIE's brother dropped off the 2010 BMW at the Champs Auto Sales dealership and left the area. Affiant has had about two or three recorded conversations with UZOZIE since that event and each time he has denied knowing anything about the defendant's fraud or that they obtained a vehicle for his brother.
10. On December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014, CRUZ was detained and arrested after leaving the Briar Forest apartment driving the 2012 Audi he purchased from Champs Auto Sales in the name of Jordan Brown. He identified himself to law enforcement as Jordan Brown and was in possession of the counterfeit Jordan Brown license. He was transported to the Houston Police Department city jail and processed. He was interviewed by Affiant on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014, and denied any knowledge or involvement in fraud.
11. On December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014, WELLS and RUFFIN were detained and arrested after arriving at the Briar Forest apartment driving the 2011 BMW purchased from Champs Auto Sales in the name Brandon Rudd. Affiant advised RUFFIN of his Miranda rights and obtained a written consent to search their apartment. RUFFIN waived his rights and agreed to answer questions. He admitted stealing the PII from 2525 Old Farm Rd., admitted creating counterfeit documents and using them purchase vehicles, and using the stolen PII to commit other types of bank and credit card fraud. AFFIANT interviewed WELLS the following day and he waived his Miranda rights and agreed to answer questions. He also admitted creating counterfeit documents and using them purchase vehicles, and using the stolen PII to commit other types of bank and credit card fraud. Both RUFFIN and WELLS stated they learned how to do this from CRUZ and that both observed him make the fraudulent licenses and purchase vehicles.

12. During the search of their apartment, Affiant located several boxes in the kitchen that were the records stolen from the Old Farm Road apartments. Rental application packets containing PII from the Old Farm Apartments were strewn throughout the apartment. Affiant also located and seized numerous counterfeit licenses located throughout the apartment (in different names) with the pictures of CRUZ, WELLS, and RUFFIN. Affiant also located and seized a computer on CRUZ's bed that appeared to display the counterfeit license template. Four vehicles from the chart above were also located and seized from the parking lot of the complex.
13. Affiant or other investigators have spoken with numerous individuals whose PII was used to purchase the listed vehicles. None of them gave consent for their information to be used. Affiant has spoken with numerous representatives from the listed car dealerships and learned that these deals involved interstate telephone calls, emails, and faxes of the loan applications to out of state lenders and financial institutions. Affiant had also obtained and reviewed records showing many of the loan applications were sent via US Mail or private communication couriers from the dealerships to the lenders.
14. Based upon the above, the undersigned believes there is probable cause to believe that JOEL CRUZ, DARRION WELLS, DEVANTE RUFFIN, and OBINNA UZOZIE have committed crimes in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1028A and 1349.

  
Matthew S. Boyden  
United States Postal Inspector

Sworn and Subscribed to me this 17<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2014, and I find probable cause.

  
George C. Hanks Jr.  
United States Magistrate Judge  
Southern District of Texas